



Adding Pictures, Charts, Shapes, and Video to PowerPoint

A PowerPoint presentation consisting entirely of words isn't taking full advantage of PowerPoint. One of the program's greatest strengths is its ability to combine text with photographs, illustrations, charts, shapes, diagrams, and video. Used properly, these visual elements can explain an idea faster and more effectively than another screen full of bullet points.

Most of the tools you'll need are conveniently located on the **Insert** tab of the Ribbon. The important thing isn't learning how to insert everything PowerPoint offers. It's learning to choose the right visual for the job and knowing when enough is enough.

Adding Pictures

To add a picture, select the slide where you want it and click the **Insert** tab. Choose **Pictures**, then select the source of your image. Depending on your version of PowerPoint, you can insert pictures stored on your Mac as well as images available through other supported sources.

After inserting the picture, click it to select it. Handles around its edges allow you to resize it, and you can drag the picture to reposition it on the slide. PowerPoint also provides tools for cropping and adjusting pictures. When resizing a photograph, use the corner handles whenever possible so you don't accidentally turn a perfectly normal person into someone seven feet tall and two feet wide.

Choose images that contribute to the message. One strong photograph is usually more effective than several little pictures competing for attention.

Turning Numbers Into Charts

Suppose you want to show that attendance at your organization increased over five years. You could put five numbers on the screen, but a simple chart would let the audience see the trend immediately.

Select **Insert > Chart**, then choose an appropriate chart type. PowerPoint provides familiar choices such as column, bar, line, and pie charts. When you insert one, PowerPoint provides a way to enter or edit the data used to create it.

Match the chart to the information. A line chart is useful for showing changes over time, while bar and column charts make comparisons easy to see. Pie charts can illustrate portions of a whole, although they work best when there are only a few categories. Keep charts simple enough that the audience can understand them in a few seconds.

Using Shapes to Explain Ideas

Under **Insert > Shapes**, you'll find rectangles, circles, arrows, lines, callouts, and many other objects. Shapes are useful for emphasizing information and showing relationships among ideas.

For example, three boxes connected by arrows can illustrate a three-step process more clearly than a paragraph describing it. A simple arrow can direct attention to an important part of a photograph or chart.

After inserting a shape, you can resize it, move it, change its appearance, and usually type directly into it. Shapes are easy to add, which is both their strength and their danger. A few can clarify a slide; twenty can turn it into a traffic jam.

Adding Video

Video can be especially effective when movement or sound is important to the subject. PowerPoint provides options for inserting video through the **Insert** tab, although the exact choices can vary somewhat depending on the PowerPoint version and the source of the video.

Once a video has been inserted, PowerPoint provides playback controls and options for determining how it behaves during the presentation. Test any video before presentation day, particularly if it depends on an internet connection. If a video is essential to your presentation, make certain it works on the equipment you'll actually be using.

Also remember that a presentation shouldn't become movie night. Use video when it demonstrates something better than you can explain it yourself.

Size and Position Matter

PowerPoint makes it easy to move and resize objects. Select an object and drag it to a new location, or use its handles to change its size. PowerPoint also provides **Align** and **Arrange** commands that can help keep several objects neatly positioned.

Give important visuals enough room to be seen. A detailed chart squeezed into one corner of a crowded slide isn't doing anyone much good. If an image or chart is important, consider giving it most of the slide.

Don't Let the Visuals Take Over

PowerPoint gives you an enormous collection of visual tools, but having them doesn't mean you need to use all of them. Photographs, charts, shapes, and video should help the audience understand your message rather than simply demonstrate that you know how to insert them.

Ask a simple question whenever you add something: **Does this make the idea clearer?** If the answer is yes, keep it. If the answer is no, you probably don't need it.

A well-chosen photograph can create an emotional connection. A chart can make numbers understandable. A diagram can simplify a complicated process, and a short video can show something words cannot. That's when PowerPoint begins to live up to its name: it gives your presentation a little more **power**.